

NEWS RELEASE



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Photos available on request

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Attention! Severe Color Alert Issued, Eye Strain Expected

Wet Winter and Sunshine Bring Wildflower Explosion to California State Parks

THE DESERT -- California State Park Rangers have issued a warning to the public that they may soon encounter severe eye strain due to the after affects of California's rainy weather, especially in desert locations in Southern California.

Park Rangers said that with record or near record rainfalls this winter, the desert bloom is beginning to show that this spring may be one of the greatest wildflower blooms in a decade or more.

Anza-Borrego Desert State Park has received more than eight inches of rain to date this season. The result: Wildflowers are already out and equal to last year's peak production. State Park officials said they expect that growth to continue and make this one of the best wildflower seasons on record.

If you have not experienced this spectacular natural event this is a good year to do so. The town of Borrego Springs is the community that mostly supports tourism in the area, but the park has an open camping policy as well as developed campgrounds.

With more than 600,000 acres, Anza-Borrego Desert State Park is the largest state park in the contiguous United States. 500 miles of dirt roads, 12 wilderness areas and miles of hiking trails provide visitors with an unparalleled opportunity to experience the wonders of the Colorado Desert.

The park is named after Spanish explorer Juan Bautista de Anza and the Spanish name borrego, or bighorn sheep. The park features washes, wildflowers, palm groves, cacti and sweeping vistas. Visitors may also have the chance to see roadrunner, golden eagles, kit foxes, mule deer and bighorn sheep as well as iguanas, chuckwallas and the red diamond rattlesnake. Listening devices for the hearing impaired are available in the visitor center.

The Park is located on the eastern side of San Diego County, with portions extending east into Imperial County and north into Riverside County. It is about a two-hour drive from San Diego, Riverside, and Palm Springs.

Not to be outdone, the Antelope Valley California Poppy Reserve is also on track to have a very good year for viewing poppies.

Park officials there said poppy plants are coming up and visitors could see a bloom as early as late February.

This 1,745 acre State Reserve, nestled in the Antelope Buttes 15 miles west of Lancaster, California, is located on California's most consistent poppy-bearing land. Other wildflowers: owl's clover, lupine, goldfield, cream cups, and coreopsis, to name a few, share the desert grassland to produce a mosaic of color and fragrance each spring. As unpredictable as nature - the intensity and duration of the wildflower bloom varies yearly.

Seven miles of trails, including a paved section for wheelchair access, wind gently through the wildflower fields. The broad views of this landscape provide eyefuls of brilliant wildflower colors. Whether you most enjoy expansive fields of wildflower colors and fragrance or the close-up study of a single flower, this is the place to visit.

The reserve is located 15 miles west of Highway 14 near the city of Lancaster.

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